

Baby Boy

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Category: Zootopia

Genre: Drama, Family

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2016-04-08 00:43:45

Updated: 2016-04-15 01:30:28

Packaged: 2016-04-27 22:09:25

Rating: T

Chapters: 14

Words: 11,100

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Judy and Nick are officially parents. But their newborn isn't exactly what they had expected: Life doesn't always go as planned. But is it normal to fear your own child...?

1. Chapter 1

They had dreamed of this day for months; the birth of their little one. Their bundle of joy.

As Nicholas held Judy's paw, he cringed with sympathy whenever the rabbit squinted and cried out in pain.

"It's all right," he whispered kindly in her ear. "You're doing really good."

"H-how do ...you know... that?" Judy panted, glaring at her husband.

Judy had a point. He couldn't feel what she was feeling. He couldn't even guess the amount of pain she was in as she forced a living creature out of her body.

"Push, Mrs Wilde! Push!"

Judy did her best to squeeze out the child, groaning long and loud.

A baby's voice screamed.

"We've got him!" One nurse passed the wailing kit to the other. "Easy does it..."

The infant was then cleaned up, severed from its mother, and swaddled in a blanket.

"Nick..." Judy reached out her paws, "Let me see him... I want to see

our baby."

Nicholas was given the swaddled kit, which he placed gingerly into Judy's paws. She removed the covering from the infant's face and gasped.

The deformed animal was born missing an arm. It was dark grey in color, and it's forehead sloped inward. It's ears were like ribbons, thin and flappy, hanging down on its face like hair.

"It's a ..." Judy hesitated, then smiled hard. "It's a boy..." Tears welled up into her eyes.

Nicholas smiled and leaned against his wife. He lowered his paw and allowed the infant to claw at his fingers. "Look at our beautiful boy..." He said softly, planting a kiss on Judy's forehead.

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Despite his appearance the doctors told the Wilde's that their baby was perfectly healthy and could be taken home the same day.

Nick drove the car as they headed home while Judy sat beside him, her shirt hanging low, nursing their little boy.

Neither of them could say to the other "he was your eyes" or "he looks just like you", because these types of statements would all be lies. The infant had pale blue eyes and looked like neither of them in color, shape, or form. Even his fur felt wiry, like hay.

Nick and Judy did not talk until they were home. Nick pulled up in the garage and walked around the car, opening it for his wife.

"I'm fine, I can walk." Judy said, her voice dry. She cradled the child close and followed the fox into the house.

The living room was nearly empty, having only a couch, a table, and a playpen. The kitchen was neat and tightly. The fox and rabbit walked by these rooms and into the master bedroom, where a wooden crib waited.

Judy unlatched the infant from her breast and laid him down on a blanket, saying nothing.

Nicholas stood beside her and kissed her neck. "Look what we made together..." He said with a kind smile.

Judy nodded. "Yes." She could not hide her disappointment. But as a mother, she knew that it was her responsibility to raise and nurture this little one. "He's ... He's lovely."

The infant wiggled and kicked at the blanket, as if hating it's soft texture.

Nick hesitated. "What are we going to call it- him..?"

Judy turned and faced her husband, tears rolling down her cheeks.

Monster! Demon! Creature! Thing!

She grabbed hold of Nick's arms. "I don't know...!" She whispered fiercely.

Nicholas lowered his head and kissed her forehead. "We'll think of something."

2. Chapter 2

It was a warm, sunny afternoon and Nick Wilde stood outside in the backyard staring forward at the new neighbors. They were a small family of deer; a mother, a father, and a pair of twin fauns. How precious. Nicholas waved a paw in greeting as the deer snuck into the house, closing the door behind them. "They must be frightened because I'm a fox," he muttered to himself. "According to the history books, we're natural enemies..."

"Nick?"

It was his rabbit wife, Judy, stepping out onto the lawn, a child bundled tightly in a blue blanket. Buddled for its own protection, or the protection of others- it was hard to tell.

The fox went over and gathered his wife in his arms, gently crushing her and the little one with his affection. "Yes, my dear?" he asked.

"Could you..." Judy hesitated. "Could you feed the baby for me?" This was always a hard request for her to make; switching the infant from mother's milk to a powdered formula was a transition neither baby nor mother liked. Judy was ashamed of having to swap him over, but she couldn't stand how hard the child bit. Even toothless, those hard, powerful gums felt like rocks grounding against her tender breasts. Breast feeding was meant to be a sweet, bonding moment. Not a bloodied battlefield.

Planting a kiss on Judy's forehead, Nick wordlessly took the baby into his arms and went inside the house. The baby wiggled powerfully in his blanket, grunting fiercely, his one arm twitching like a claw on a broken crane game.

Judy followed her husband, her steps silent, staying just far enough to not be considered hovering. "Nick?" she said, a voice gentle like dandelion seeds.

Nick turned his head, black-tipped ears rotating forward. "Hm?" he said, adjusting the baby so that he laid across his shoulder, belly-down.

"His formula is above the sink, next to his bottles and rubber nipples."

"Ah, gotcha." Nick flipped open a cabinet and shuffled things around with one paw.

Feeling like a witness, Judy hurried over and took back their child, saying, "Sorry, go ahead. I'll hold him until you're ready."

The fox shook his head playfully, smiling into the cabinets. "Why so frantic, little bunny?"

"I'm just nervous... Feeding time always makes me nervous."

"I can see why... I can't find a nipple that hasn't been torn to shreds... Ah, here's one!" He filled the bottle halfway with warm water from the sink, added in the powder, screwed on the nipple, and shook it until it looked like deluded milk. Judy passed the child over; the child shrieked and kicked like mad. As soon as the bottom touched the infant's lips, he bit down hard, making both of his parents cringe.

"Well. That takes care of that." Nick walked over and sat down on the couch, gently easing the child onto his back while he continued sucking from the bottle. "Piece of cake! Or should I say, piece of carrot cake?"

Judy let out the breath she was holding and sighed, slapping Nick playfully over the head. "Shut up..."

"He's getting close to... What, two months?" asked Nicholas.

The rabbit nodded. "He'll be two months in three days."

"What a big boy you're getting to be, Alfred!" Nick said cheerfully, patting the baby on the back.

"We talked about this, Nick. I'm not naming our baby Alfred."

"Fine. Then he'll be nameless for another two months." He took the bottle from the child; screaming, one arm twisting and lashing out, the infant managed to punch Nick square in the nose. "Ow!" Nick dropped the bottle and put a paw to his now-bleeding nose. "He hit me!"

Judy rolled her eyes and picked up the fallen bottle, plugging the nipple back into the little one's mouth. "He didn't do it on purpose."

"Didn't he?" Nick turned his head, watching his wife. "What about your nipples? You said he bit you on purpose."

Judy crossed her arms over her chest self-consciously. "That's different!"

Nicholas looked back down at the grey, wiry-haired child. It's eyes were massive, fixing Nick with an almost savage glare.

Nick spoke softly. "Let's name him Elliot."

"Elliot? Why?" Judy went over and stood beside the couch, watching the child, as if the child held all the answers.

"I think it suits him. Don't you?" asked the fox.

Judy smiled. "Yeah... I actually do like that name. Elliot..."

The baby gnawed down hard on the nipple of the bottle, then spat it out. Both parents leaned in close, awestruck, waiting...

Elliot took in a deep breath... Then started screaming like mad.

3. Chapter 3

At three months, baby Elliot was tearing up everything his parents put in his crib; blankets, soft rubber toys, stuffed people. Nothing would satisfy his hungry mouth, which was always open and screaming.

Nicholas tried taking the baby for walks, having the child strapped to his chest like a dynamite, hoping this would cheer him up. But Elliot swiped and clawed at the world with his one arm, as if trying to infect and drain the color from the world.

At falling leaves, Elliot screamed and swung his claws. At friendly neighbors passing by, he would gum at the straps which bind him and howl in anger.

When the nice deer family politely waved their hooves in greeting, Elliot would thrash wildly and shriek, causing Nick to cover his own ears from the terrible noise.

When Nicholas arrived home and collapsed on the couch, it was Judy's turn to take little Elliot. She unstrapped him and walked with him into the kitchen, feeding him a bottle which she had already prepared. The child gummed and bit the nipple fiercely; holes already in the rubber squirted out little streams of milk.

As Elliot drank, Judy adjusted the baby's weight, finding him much heavier than he should be. Her arms started to ache; Judy went and sat in a chair at the kitchen table, propping Elliot up.

To the rabbit's surprise, Elliot managed to sit up perfectly without assistance. With his grabby paw, Elliot snatched the bottle from his mother and drank from it all by himself, pale blue eyes vibrant and staring.

"Wow, you're really hungry." Judy said softly.

Elliot grunted, suckling loudly. Down down down, glug glug, glug; empty. Elliot hurtled the bottle across the room and screamed.

Leaving him experimentally on the table, Judy left the chair and grabbed a fresh, prepared bottle. When she turned back around, Elliot was seen standing on the table, all by himself...

"N-Nick...?" Judy called. She walked slowly to the table and offered her son the bottle.

Elliot took it in his fist and sat back down, hard.

"What was that noise?" Nick went over and stood in the doorway.
"Don't leave Elliot sitting, he'll fall over—" the fox hurried over to grab the infant, but Judy put a paw on his arm.

"Nick. Look at him. He doesn't need us... He's doing everything just

fine on his own."

"Don't talk silly-talk." Nicholas frowned and went to his son, picking him up. Judy noticed the strain in the fox's muscles as he lifted the child and held him.

"He's our son, Judy. We best get used to it." Nick smiled at their baby. Their cub. Their kit.

Elliot finished his bottle and slapped his father with it across the face, then threw back his head, screaming.

4. Chapter 4

At four months, little Elliot was attempting to crawl on his own. He would explore the boundaries of his crib, bumping into each of the four corners, letting out high-pitched squeaks whenever he did so.

Judy took the infant out and placed him on the floor, then lined the interior of the crib with blankets and pillows. It was like a mini insane asylum; little Elliot could bump against anything he wanted and no harm would come to him.

When the sun was out, Elliot's mother would place him in a stroller and take a walk in Zootopia, letting him see all the different buildings, animals, colors. Zootopia never ceased to amaze Judy. But Elliot would grow bored after the first few minutes and start gumming on the straps of his seatbelt.

Animals large and small poked their heads into the stroller with smiles and would back off with their smiles frozen in place.

"How adorable!" "What a cutie pie!" "Isn't he precious?" they would say over the baby's shrieking.

Nick would nod his head proudly while Elliot swung his fist at the animals who got too close.

"He isn't used to strangers," Nick would say apologetically whenever Elliot gave animals a black eye or a bloody nose.

When he went back to the house, Nicholas would unstrap little Elliot and let him crawl around on the floor.

"Judy, come look!"

Judy entered the room. "I know, he's crawling. He's getting better at it every day. Soon he'll be walking all over us..."

"He can't learn how to walk at three months." This was true. But after several more months passed, the child turned eight months and had grown into the habit of climbing on everything.

He would climb on the tables, climb up onto the kitchen counter, climb up into his parents bed- this is something that made Judy shudder: to see that grey, deformed child breathing heavily in her face sent chills down her spine.

She admitted this to Nicholas one afternoon while Elliot was taking a nap in his crib. "I feel like he wants to eat me." Judy said.

The fox laughed softly. "Why would he? We feed him regularly."

Judy sighed. Of course Nick wouldn't understand; he was too fond of their boy. Judy let the subject drop and didn't mention it again. However, she started shutting Elliot's bedroom door at night, so she wouldn't wake up to any more surprises.

Several days passed. Elliot had his fits of rage in the middle of the night, but the closed door muted his rage tremendously.

Then one morning, while Judy was just waking up in bed next to her foxy husband, she felt something sharp cut her face. Judy flinched and sat up.

Right beside her, squatting low on the bed, was Elliot wearing his Aqua-green overalls, and holding a long kitchen knife.

Judy said nothing about this to Nick, but immediately starting locking Elliot's bedroom door.

5. Chapter 5

"Are you sure you want to do this?" Judy asked her husband, guiding little Elliot's feet into his onesie.

"Why do you keep asking me that?" Nick rubbed his face, the topic wearing him down. "Yes, I'm sure."

"I just don't know how he'll do with other children..."

"He plays with us well enough," the fox said confidently.

Judy looked up at Nick. "I have a feeling most children don't throw, choke, or try to eat their toys."

Nick shrugged. He didn't know, either; they didn't have any children to compare Elliot to. Was it normal for a baby to never smile...? Nick almost asked this but was silenced when Judy dropped the heavy boy into the fox's arms.

"I'm going to go grab his stroller," Judy said as she left the room.

"Uuuuhhp'sa daisy!" Nick struggled to lift the boy high towards the ceiling. Elliot stared hard at his father, as if asking him where his sanity had flown off to. Nick lowered the boy down and helped Judy buckle him into his seat.

Elliot immediately started screaming and kicking. Judy dropped the child's favorite human doll into the stroller; a skinny man called Pee Wee, who laughed whenever he was squeezed.

This doll never stopped laughing; Elliot pulled and squeezed and bit and tore at the rubber doll. His face turned red in frustration as the doll continued to laugh at him.

Nick couldn't help but chuckle. He looked sideways at his wife and saw that she was smiling too. They were enjoying Elliot's anger. Their eyes met and they looked away in shame.

"I'm sure he'll be just fine," Nick said with a nod. "Besides, you can't be on maternity leave forever."

"I know that," Judy snapped. "Elliot is just... He's a special case. He deserves special attention."

"The people at the day care are nice. I told you, I already looked in to them." Nick laid a hand on his wife's arm and gave her a kiss on the cheek. "He'll be fine."

The day care was two miles away from the house. Which would take the average bunny an hour's walk.

The weather outside was so nice, that Mr and Mrs Wilde just couldn't say no to walking.

Down the sidewalk they pushed a twelve month old pup, who wiggled and screamed and shouted hatefully; Judy had to bend down and collect Pee Wee from the sidewalk multiple times before finally shoving the doll in her purse.

"Say goodbye to Pee Wee Herman." Judy said as she collected the doll.

"Rrrrrraaaaaahhhn!" Growled the child loudly.

Nick looked at his wife. "Aren't most children supposed to say at least ten words by now?"

"No." Judy said defensively. "Why?"

"He can't even say mommy or daddy... Don't you think that's sad?"

"He's just a late bloomer." Judy dug out a ziplock bag of baby carrots from her purse and gave her son one of them to chew on.

"We'll find out when we get to the daycare." Nick said.

Judy stopped pushing the stroller and gave the fox a dirty look. "We are not comparing our son to all the others."

"I know, I know..." Nick put a hand between his son's thin, flaky ears and scratched him gently.

Elliot jerked his head back and tried to bite his fingers.

Nick laughed. "He must have thought my finger was a carrot!"

Judy tried to smile, failed.

6. Chapter 6

"Is this little Elliot I've heard so much about?" The ibex came

around the check-in desk, her face lit up in a smile. She got down on level with the stroller and spoke in a sweet tone of voice: "Hello little guy! How are you today?" She reached down and tugged playfully at Elliot's foot, which was comfortably stuffed at the bottom of his onesie.

Elliot drew back his leg as far up as the seatbelt would let him, then kicked the ibex hard in the face.

The lady backed off, clutching her nose. It immediately started to bleed; she pinched it tightly between her hooves. Remarkably, she still managed to smile. "He could make a real good soccer player one day!" She said.

Nicholas laughed, putting a reassuring arm around his wife. He kissed Judy on the cheek. "My wife is a bit nervous about bringing him in, because of that, and other reasons."

"Well," said the ibex. "Since Elliot is such a big boy, we'll be sticking him in with the other one and two year olds."

"Do you think the bigger kids will pick on him?" Asked Nick.

"Sir, we do not tolerate any type of bullying or aggressive behavior in here." Blood dripped heavily between her hoof.

"That's wonderful! Isn't that wonderful, honey?" Nick nudged his wife. She flinched, as if startled from a daze. The rabbit stepped forward.

"If Elliot becomes a problem... You would call us, right?" Asked Judy.

"Oh of course ma'm! We already have all of your information on file. And you're welcome to take one of our business cards. Our number is highlighted in pink."

Nicholas nodded, taking two cards and giving one to Judy. Then it was time to say goodbye.

Judy stooped down and looked cautiously into Elliot's face. The child stared back, unblinking. Pale blue eyes made brilliant by his dark grey fur.

"You be a good boy and play nice." Judy said, as if giving mission commands to a robot.

Nick squatted down. "Bye bye Elly. Have lots of fun!"

The ibex (whose nose finally stopped bleeding) walked around and took hold of the stroller. "Everything will be just fine!" She said. "Have a nice morning!"

Nicholas wrapped his arm around his wife and walked her out of the building. Suddenly, Judy burst out into tears and leaned against him.

"Oh, sweetheart, it's going to be okay..." Nick rubbed her back. "Elliot will be fine... I promise..."

"It's not him I'm worried about!" Judy sobbed out. "I'm worried about all the rest of the children!"

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It wasn't twenty minutes later that Nicholas received a phone call from the daycare. Since Nick had placed himself as Elliot's primary contact, Judy would only be called if Nick missed the call.

Judy was walking back home beside him when he answered the call.

"Hello?"

"Hello Mr. Wilde. I'm calling to report an incident regarding your son and another child."

"Mhm. Go ahead." Nick met his wife's eye and winked.

"Your son managed to get a hold of one of our stapler guns from the counter and he used it on an elephant, stapling his ears against his face."

Nick nodded, pressing the phone hard against his ear. He did his best to remain calm. "Thank you for telling me." Nick lowered the phone to hang up, when the voice on the other line frantically asked a question. "What was that?" Asked Nick.

"When will you be available for pick up?"

"Hmm... Maybe sometime this afternoon. Thank you for calling!" Nick hung up, giving Judy a smile.

Judy smiled back, weakly. "Was that the daycare?" She couldn't resist; she just had to ask.

"No, just work." Nick said carelessly, taking hold of her paw.

Once they arrived home, the Wilde's kissed each other (frequently; little "don't worry" kisses of reassurance) and left in separate cars for their separate work tasks given to them by the ZPD.

Judy's day involved catching people on her radar who were speeding. She was set up next to a movie theatre; people would speed like mad to get here before their showing. Previews were just too good to miss!

Meanwhile, not wanting to worry Judy, Nicholas kept his phone on his hip, even though he was supposed to be a security guard at the DMV. His phone rang once, loud and clear, and he was forced to abandon his post and stand outside with the smokers.

"Hello?" Nick coughed twice, then answered again, hoarse.

"Hello?"

"Mr. Wilde? Hi. This is Diana from the daycare. I'm calling to inform you about an incident involving your son."

"Yes? What happened?"

"Well..Elliot is a very strong boy, Mr Wilde..."

"Go on." Nick said.

"He was crying real loud so we thought he needed a diaper change. But when one of my associates picked him up, he punched her in the face. The lady ended up falling to the floor after striking her head on the table. She was sent to the ER."

"And Elliot?"

"He's fine. Elliot is sitting in what we call "the cube", which is a play pen away from the other children. He can still engage; there's a variety of picture books and soft toys."

"Thank you for telling me."

"Yes, about that... We need you to pick up your son as soon as possible. Given the circumstances."

"Of course. I'll be there soon." Nicholas hung up, gasping for air, and ran back into the DMV. He stood with his back against a wall and sighed, watching the sloths do their thing.

"Flash puts them all to shame..." Nick chuckled, then looked down at his phone. "They better not call Judy next."

Luckily for Nick, they did not. But thirty minutes later, Nick received a call.

"Mr Wilde this is detective Bradbury, how are you this evening?"

"Uhhhh..." Nick cupped his phone to his shirt and ran outside, where he could talk without being frowned upon. "Hello?"

"Mr Wilde?"

"Yeah, yes?"

"Do you know why I'm calling, sir?"

"Nope. I really have no idea-

"Your son Elliot has killed three children."

"What?!"

A cow walked over to Nick and laid a hoof on his shoulder. "Hey man, you want a blunt? You look so stressed, dawg..."

Nick shrugged the cow off and moved farther down the sidewalk. "How did that happen?" The fox asked.

"He beat one child repeatedly in the face with a toy truck; bit open and partially ate one child's intestines; and ... Let's see here... Twisted one of the children's necks until it broke."

Nick dropped his phone. How...? How could a child be a murderer...? How could- oh, right, Judy; Nick picked back up his phone. "I'll be

sure to let my life know. I'll tell her myself."

"We need you both to come here at once." The detective growled.

"Look, officer Buttberry-"

"Bradbury-"

"My wife can't make it right now. So it'll just be me. Okay?"

"... That's fine."

"All right. Bye." Nicholas hung up, then turned and looked at the DMV.

Who has ever heard of crimes being committed at a DMV? That's just silly.

Nick abandoned his post and got into the car. He started the engine and headed towards the daycare. He tried whistling to lighten his mood, but his mouth felt uncommonly dry.

"Oh, Elliot..." He sighed quietly. "I never knew you were in so much pain..."

7. Chapter 7

Nicholas' place cruiser was not the only one that pulled in to the daycare center. Families stood outside of the building, clutching their children's paws and wiping their wet eyes. Fathers yelled and mothers wept. Something had happened that was beyond their understand. How on earth could a one year old kill other children?

The security cameras proved that this could happen.

The fox stepped out of the car and marched up to the front doors, shoulding past the shouting and angry crowd of animals. Down the hallways he went, paws tredding softly against the hardwood floor. A family of lions watched him past; the mother pulled her cub closer, fearing for his safety. It was clear what was going on here; Nicholas was being shunned, mocked, hated, with every step he took.

Once he reached the one to two year olds room, Nick hesitated, trying to prepare himself. Did the other animals expect him to scold, beat, or bark at his own child? How could little Elliot know what he was doing? The boy's only experience with death was when Judy's pet betta fish stopped swimming in it's bowl. The boy knew nothing; he was therefore blissfully ignorant.

The fox entered the room. All of the families had already gathered their puppies, kittens, joeys, cubs. All that remained was Elliot, sitting in the "the cube"; a playpen filled with soft cotton stuffing from the dolls he ripped apart. Upon seeing his father, Elliot stood up and walked to the bars of the pen, gripping them, pleading for freedom like the prisoner he was.

"Oh, Elliot..." the fox went over and picked up his son. He did not

scream or kick or bite. He wrapped his arms tightly around his father's neck and stared past his shoulder. "I'm sorry for the trouble he's caused you all." Nick said, nodding his head in submission. "I really am."

A snow leopard stepped up to Nick. "Sir, we're going to have to ask you to stay."

"Are you detective Bradbury?" asked Nick.

"Yes. Now please, have a seat. We need to discuss the actions of your son."

"I'm sorry, but my son is not a murderer. I'm not going to sit down and be told "what's wrong" with my boy. He didn't know what he was doing. They were just accidents."

"Mr. Wilde. It is in your best interest to follow my instructions and listen to what I have to say."

"No. I refuse to." Nick located Elliot's stroller parked against the wall and bent down, buckling up the one-armed toddler. "We're leaving."

The detective watched Nick with sharp blue eyes. He wrote something down in a notepad, sighing.

Nick pushed past the leopard, wheeling Elliot ahead of himself; down the hall they went. Nick paused at the exit and decided to take Elliot out one of the side doors, to avoid the public.

Once the fox reached his cruiser he unbuckled Elliot and put him into the backseat, then buckled him in with the seatbelt. He popped the trunk open and stuffed the stroller in, then hopped in the front seat and drove towards home. He dialed the office phone to his work and informed Chief Bogo that there was a family emergency and he had to go. Chief wanted to ask questions, but Nicholas cut him off and hung up the phone.

"Well, it's just you and me, Elly!" Nicholas said, trying to lighten the consuming silence. "Think we should stop by Mommy's work and say hello?"

Elliot leaned forward in his seat, placing his one hand on his knee. He stared at his father through the rearview mirror.

Nick turned around and stared back. "Are you going to say something?" the fox asked softly.

Then, Elliot did something remarkable. He shook his head no.

Breathless, Nicholas said, "Do you want to go see Mommy?"

Elliot nodded.

"Then that's what we're going to do." Nick cranked the car into life and pulled out of the daycare. Seeing his police cruiser, animals ran over and started punching and slapping the car, letting out angry yells and terrible words.

To Nick's surprise, Elliot did not scream. The boy just stared with his blank face, watching, learning.

Once Nick broke free from the crowd, he drove smoothly down the road, heading towards the movie theatre where his wife was set up with her radar. He pulled up beside his wife's car and rolled down the window. "Excuse me officer, do you know where the closest donut shop is?"

"Nick?" Judy stepped out of the car and approached her husband, who opened his door and met his wife halfway; they hugged tightly.

"How are you feeling?" asked Nick, gently petting the rabbit's long ears.

"I've been worried sick about Elliot..." she admitted, clinging to his uniform.

"Well, he's actually here with me." Nick smiled as she looked up at his face. "There was a small incident..."

"What kind of incident?" Judy let Nick go and ran to the back of the car, opening the door.

Elliot stared at his mother. Judy started back. Nick came and hovered above Judy shoulder, watching. "He missed his mommy." Nick mumbled in Judy's ear, kissing her on the neck.

"Did you miss me...?" Judy frowned slightly, as if directing the question to a brick wall.

But Elliot responded; he raised his one arm and pointed with his fingers. His mouth opened, then... he spoke.

"Mommy is bad."

Judy flinched, then looked at Nick who started laughing. "His first words!" Nick said, grinning. "He must have picked that up from the daycare."

Judy backed off and shut the car door. She was wounded. She knew she was a bad mother, always fearing the actions of her son. But she couldn't help it; Elliot terrified her. Did that really make her a bad mother...?

"Let's go home, fruitcake." Nick said fondly, climbing into the driver's seat.

"Nick..." Judy looked at her fox husband desperately. "Why did he say that to me?"

Nick shrugged. "Apparently you need to be spanked when you get home." Nick winked at Judy.

The rabbit blushed, turning her face away. "I guess I'll see you at home, then."

"Judy."

"Yes, Nick?"

"I love you." Nicholas said, watching his wife's body language.

Judy walked over and kissed the fox on his lips. "I love you too. Be safe on the way home."

"All right. Enjoy the rest of your day."

Nick pulled the car off the side of the road and headed home. In the back seat, Elliot sat quietly. Too quietly. Nick had no idea what was going on in that child's head...

8. Chapter 8

The car drove softly down the smooth asphalt road. In the back seat, Elliot chewed up a speeding ticket that was given to him by his father.

"Good job, Elliot!" Nick said, smiling. "Tear it all up."

The fox slowed the car to a stop at a red light, then leaned over sideways and opened the glove compartment, looking for any other goodies he could bestow upon his son.

Napkins, police cruiser manual, an envelope crammed with insurance information, and a roll of happy face stickers. He grabbed the roll of stickers and tossed them into Elliot's lap.

"There you go, Elly. There's you some smiley face stickers."

The infant dropped the chewed up parking ticket and grabbed the roll, which immediately fell apart like a ribbon. Elliot threw it against the window, and it fell to the floorboard. Now Elliot had nothing to play with.

The child arched his back against the seat and screamed.

"Easy buddy, we're almost home."

But Elliot kept screaming, throwing himself around in his seat, clawing at the leather with his abnormally strong paw.

Nick couldn't drive properly; his ears were starting to ache and he kept turning around in his seat to make sure Elliot didn't hurt himself. Once he pulled over, Nick unbuckled and climbed into the back. He sat down next to Elliot and spoke quietly, gently.

"I see a little piggy, Elly. Do you see a little piggy?"

Elliot shut his mouth and stared at Nick with huge, pale eyes. It seemed as if he were holding his breath.

Nick took Elliot's paw into his and counted each finger as if it were a piggy. "Here's one piggy, two piggy... Three piggy..."

Elliot's face cracked open like an Easter egg; he was smiling!

Nicholas smiled proudly and tickled the boy's palm. "Now all the piggies are eating; nom nom nom."

Soon, Elliot calmed down and started breathing normally. He was relaxed. Nick kissed his son on his head, then climbed back into the front seat to drive.

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The energy drink went down his throat with a delightful burning sensation, the flavor sweet and citrusy. Nick threw the empty can into the recycle bin and walked back into the living room where Elliot was playing with a green rubber dinosaur.

"Watch out, Elliot," Nick warned with a smile. "Reptar might try to eat your fingers."

Elliot gave Nick a hard stare, then looked at the dinosaur. The boy reached out and grabbed the toy by its neck and squeezed, making unpleasant grunting noises.

"Elly, hey! Don't hurt Reptar!" Nicholas said, running over. Is this the same way he killed those children...? Was it because he had felt threatened? Nick started to snatch the toy away, but stopped. He had another idea.

"Reptar said he's sorry and he won't do it again." Nick said carefully.

Elliot looked up at his dad, then threw the dinosaur across the room and started shrieking angrily.

"I'll get you a different toy—" Nick turned and looked around the house. Everything considered as a toy was already torn up or broken. He grabbed the tv remote and handed it to his son.

Elliot looked down at the remote, then stood up and walked over to the table, setting the remote back down. He pointed to the tv and grunted.

Nicholas sat down on the couch and pulled little Elliot into his lap, turning on the television. He put it on a nice wholesome show called Teletubbies.

Elliot shook his head, over and over at every channel he turned it to.

Finally, Nick just turned off the tv.

Only then did Elliot nod. He turned and cuddled against Nick's chest.

The fox smiled and rubbed his son's fur. "How on earth could anyone think you are evil...?" He muttered softly, kissing his son between the ears.

9. Chapter 9

Judy didn't make very much noise when she came home from work that

day, but she wasn't quiet, either; her boys, asleep on the couch, both woke up from the door opening and shutting.

"Urhhmm..." Nick sat up slowly, pulling little Elliot close as if he were a warm blanket. "Judy?" He said loudly.

Judy dropped her things to the floor and ran over to the couch. "What? What happened?"

The fox blinked up at her. "Nothing, dear. I just wasn't sure if that was you coming in through the door."

Judy frowned. "Well if it wasn't me, I would hope that you wouldn't just sit there like a bum."

Nick frowned, cuddling Elliot. "I would have probably called 911."

"We are 911, Nick." Judy glanced at Elliot with a mix of envy and fear, then stomped into the kitchen.

"How was work?" Nick asked, getting to his feet. He eased Elliot to the floor so he could crawl or walk around, then followed Judy into the kitchen. "Did something happen at work?"

"It wasn't work." Judy gave Nick a cold glare. "You never told me about the incident. But don't worry; I found out."

"Y-you did...?" Nick licked his lips nervously.

"Yes. Stapling an elephants ears to their face?" Judy shook her rabbit ears. "Did you think that I wouldn't find out?"

Nick laughed under his breath, covering his mouth with a paw. "Is that all you heard?"

"It's not funny, you shouldn't be laugh-..." She trailed off, staring at Nick. "What else happened." This wasn't a question. It was a demand.

"Well, Elliot did tear up a few of their toys, but that's all I know of." Nicholas replied, lying like a snake.

Judy sighed, then stepped close and hugged onto her husband. "I wouldn't have married you if I didn't think I could trust you... Thank you." She kissed him on the lips, which he returned generously, guiltily.

Elliot walked over and looked up at his parents. In his teeth he carried the head of Reptar.

"Elliot has been such a good boy," Nicholas said, breaking away from his wife to pick up their child.

Judy stared at the boy. "But I'm a bad mommy, remember?" She said flatly.

"You aren't a bad anything," Nick said, holding their child close.

Judy fell quiet, staring at Elliot with her bright purple eyes.

Nick smiled. "Here; take Elliot. Have some quality bonding time... I'm going to go take a shower."

"Oh, well... If you say so..." Judy held Elliot at arm's length, full of uncertainty. Once Nick left the room and turned on the faucet, Judy placed Elliot on the floor. "You were very naughty today at daycare, weren't you?" Judy asked.

Elliot glared up at her.

"You hurt that poor elephant. Do you remember?" Judy asked.

Elliot looked up at the ceiling and pointed.

Judy looked up. She saw nothing out of the ordinary; no spiders, no wasps, no mystery stains... But when she looked back at Elliot, she found he had scooted closer.

Judy took a few steps backwards and looked around for something, anything she could use to entertain the boy. She put on an oven mitt and squatted down.

"Hello there Mister Mitt, how are you today?" She said, then opened and closed the mitt like a mouth: "I'm doing grrrrrrreat!"

Elliot got to his feet and walked off.

"Thank goodness..." Judy shuddered, then set the mitt on the counter. She searched in the refrigerator for a snack and found baby carrots. She took two of them out of the bag and crunched down on them hungrily.

Meanwhile, Elliot went over to the bathroom door. He lowered his head and banged on it with his skull, over and over again. The child opened his mouth and let out a terrible wail.

Judy ran over quickly. "What are you doing?!" She asked wildly.

He's trying to break his way into the bathroom. He wants to hurt Nick...!

The rabbit didn't know what else to do; she pushed Elliot over. The toddler fell to the floor and stopped wailing immediately. He laid there, stiff, watching her hatefully with his eyes.

On the bathroom door was blood from the child's forehead. Judy squatted down next to her son. "You did that to yourself," Judy told him firmly. "I barely pushed you; you're the one who hurt yourself, banging your face into the door."

Elliot took in a deep breath and screamed, rolling back and forth on his back like a helpless turtle.

"Stop that," Judy said. "Quit whining. There's nothing wrong with you."

Liar. Something had to be wrong with Elliot to make him so unresponsive to affection. Was it her fault?

Nick came out of the bathroom, wrapped in a towel. "Aww, Elly, did you fall down?" He reached and picked up Elliot.

Judy stood up. "He's fine. I was taking care of it."

"There's blood on his forehead!" Nick immediately began licking it off. Elliot shut his mouth, turning mute.

"He's fine..." Judy lied. Or was she telling the truth? Who was at fault; the mother or the child?

Nicholas wasn't listening. He was still petting and nursing the child.

The rabbit sighed and walked away to the bedroom, where she collapsed and curled up on the bed. All of a sudden, she missed Nick. Even though he lived in the same house; even though they were married, she felt so isolated and distant from him. She reached out and touched his side of the bed and cried.

"I wish things could go back to normal..." She whimpered into the cold bedsheets.

10. Chapter 10

When Judy awoke from her nap, her ears gradually picked up the sound of the television in the next room. It sounded like a comedy; there was laughter.

Judy rolled off the bed and left the bedroom, keeping her steps light, soundless across the carpet. She poked her head around the corner into the living room. To her surprise, the tv was off. It was just Nick and their baby, sitting across from each other in the floor, playing with plastic toy animals.

Judy walked into the room, making sure to stay behind Elliot so that he doesn't see her; so that the child doesn't decide to clam up.

Nick made a horse gallop into his mouth: "Neeeihhh!" The fox chomped on the horse violently, but gently, not wanting to break the toy.

And what did Elliot do?

He laughed; he opened his mouth and let out the sweetest sound. Clearly the child loved this game of "eat the animals".

Nick looked up and met Judy's eyes and winked, then dramatically spat out the horse and road a cheetah through the sky and into his mouth. "Gaaawn nom nom nom!" Nick munched on the animal, slobber dripping from his muzzle.

"Help me! Help me!" Nick begged in a small voice, dragging a moose closer to his waiting jaws. "Aaaaaaahh- Nom!"

Elliot rocked back and forth on his bottom, laughing and clapping his paws.

Judy's voice caught in her throat: she choked on her spit, then starting coughing.

Elliot immediately shut his mouth, which is what hurt Judy more than anything. She turned away.

"Judy?" Nick stood up from the floor. "What's wrong? Did we wake you?"

Judy kept her back to Nick, her shoulders trembling with emotion. "I'm just getting a glass of water..." She whispered.

"Oh. Well I'll fix you one." Nick went into the kitchen and started rummaging in the cabinets for a clean glass.

Judy could feel Elliot's eyes upon her. She turned and faced him, tears running down her face. "What?" She demanded.

Elliot looked at his collection of animal toys. He studied them carefully, kicking at some of them with his feet. Finally he reached and grabbed one, raising it to his mouth. It was a rabbit; he put it into his mouth and gnawed on it, his teeth clattering against the plastic.

Judy took a step back and fell against the wall. "He means to murder me....!" She whispered to herself.

Nick came back into the room and handed his wife a tall glass of water. "Here you go, Jude." As Judy took the glass, the fox leaned forward and kissed her on the cheek. "You look exhausted. You should probably go back to bed."

You just want Elliot all to yourself, thought Judy. Since you two obviously get along so well. The rabbit drank from the glass heavily as if it were wine, then turned and stomped back into the bedroom without a word, slamming the door behind her.

...

"You know what I just realized?" Nicholas asked the next morning as he lapped at his coffee.

"Hmm?" Asked Judy, sitting at the kitchen table.

"We never celebrated Elliot's birthday. When was it? Two, three days ago?"

Judy nodded her head. "Five days ago." How could she forget the day that little demon claws its way out of her...?

"We celebrate. Elliot could use some new toys." Nick said thoughtfully.

Judy stared at the fox. Why didn't he suggest inviting the neighborhood children over? Had he realized how evil Elliot really was? Judy decided to test him.

"I think we should try and socialize Elliot; invite a few animals over and have a party."

Nick choked on his coffee, then hid his face behind a napkin as he wiped his chin. "I don't think that's such a good idea. You do remember what he did to that elephant, right?"

"I doubt he was being watched properly," Judy said with a frown. "We could make sure nothing goes wrong."

Why was she so insistent on winning? She dreaded the idea of multiple children running and screaming in her house- fleeing from Elliot... But she couldn't shake that feeling that Nicholas was hiding something from her. She wanted to know the true-true.

But Nick was finished arguing. "Maybe you're right." He looked at his wife. "I think socializing him could be a great idea."

Judy opened her mouth to speak, when Elliot started screaming from the living room.

Nick and Judy ran into the room to find him standing on the coffee table, pointing at the television screen.

There was a butterfly, as part of a nature documentary. Elliot grunted and kept pointing.

"Elliot, get off the table. You'll hurt yourself." Judy walked over and grabbed her son, who immediately kicked and shrieked. She plopped him down on the floor and stared at him as if he were a maggot; completely disgusted at his behavior.

Nick went over and squatted beside Elliot. "See the butterfly?" He pointed at the tv. "That's called a butterfly."

Elliot shut his mouth tight, then opened it; words, real words, came out of his mouth: "Butterfly."

Nick laughed softly and scratched Elliot gently between his ears. "Good job!"

Judy gasped softly and stepped back. She felt like an intruder. No... She felt like a monster.

11. Chapter 11

They decided to invite the deer family next door, along with several other neighbors: a tiger family who had a pair of twin cubs, a baboon father who had a daughter, and they invited Clawhauster, who happily accepted the invitation and volunteered to stop by the bakery and bring the birthday cake.

The decorations were meager, but they did the best with what they had; yellow streamers taped to the ceiling, blue streamers in the doorways, and a green plastic table cloth laid out on the kitchen table.

Judy dressed Elliot in blue shorts and a nice white t-shirt. This process took several long minutes, as Elliot kicked and swiped at her with his claw.

Meanwhile, Nick was cooking tofu burgers and hot-dogs on the grill, whistling while he worked. It was a beautiful day outside; warm and sunny, clouds stretching themselves out across the sky.

The first to arrive (thirty minutes early) was Clawhauster with a cake box under his arm. He was still wearing his police uniform, and explained that he got there as soon as he could.

"Come on in," Judy said, holding Elliot on her hip.

"Awww, is this your baby?" Clawhauster reached a paw out, saying, "Can I hold him?"

Elliot leaned forward and reached for him.

"No!" Judy snapped, jerking her son away. "He... He might bite you."

"Oh." The pudgy cheetah frowned, then smiled. "I'll go put the cake in the kitchen!"

Judy closed the front door then quickly sat Elliot down. The toddler stood up and walked away from her, not looking back.

Judy went into the kitchen with Clawhauster and inspected the cake. It was a simple vanilla cake with white icing. Very plain. But Judy was grateful that she didn't have to bake.

Together, the rabbit and cheetah worked on making party trays; one plate full of sliced and diced vegetables, another plate stacked with crackers and cheese.

Nicholas came back inside with the food just as the rest of the guests were arriving.

Elliot stood up on the couch, peering at the different animals coming into his territory. The two tiger cubs ran straight to the living room and fought over the tv remote while the baboon and deer stood wide-eyed with their parents.

Elliot jumped from the couch and onto the floor, watching the tigers.

"Gimme!" Yelled the tiger.

"No, mine!" Whined the other tiger.

Elliot pounced off the couch and snatched the remote with his teeth, also biting into one of the cub's paws.

The cub shrieked and fell backwards, the second cub standing there in shock.

Elliot spat the remote out and ran into the kitchen.

The tiger family and Nick entered the living room to see one cub sucking on his paw while the other one picked the remote off the floor.

"Stop fighting, you two." Said the tiger dad.

Nicholas smiled with relief. "I can put it on cartoons if they'd like to watch something."

"Oh no, it's fine, they'll survive a couple of hours without it." Answered the female tiger with a wave of her paw.

"Hey there little troublemaker!" The cheetah gushed over Elliot, who stood licking the blood off his lips.

Judy turned quickly. "Don't get too close to him," she warned, cringing at the very sight of her son.

"But he's so huggable! How can you resist that face?"

Elliot slowly turned his head and glared at his mother.

Judy swallowed hard. "F-face of an angel..." She muttered.

"I know, right?" The cheetah grabbed the tray of cheese and crackers and left the room, saying, "I'll start passing out snacks to the kiddies."

Judy sighed, turning her back to Elliot. This was a bad idea; Judy grabbed the vegetable tray and took a step forward, tripping over Elliot who had laid down behind her feet.

Judy fell forward and dropped the tray of food in order to catch herself. Panting, she turned and looked at Elliot.

He crawled towards Judy, then picked up stalk of broccoli and threw it at her face.

Judy started to get to her feet when Elliot aimed his head at the ceiling and screamed.

Nick came into the kitchen at once and saw Judy standing beside their crying son, the vegetables spewed all over the floor.

"What happened?" Nick demanded, picking up Elliot from the floor. Cradled in his father's arms, Elliot leaned against Nick's chest and breathed calmly.

Judy noticed this and snapped, getting to her feet and pointing a paw at their son. "He's doing this to me on purpose! He's a rotten, spoiled, mean little boy!"

"Judy...!" Nick put a paw over Elliot's ears, but the damage had already been done; sniffing, the little birthday boy began to cry.

Casting quick glances at one another, the guests moved themselves to the living room to watch Finding Nemo, which was playing on the television.

Left alone in private, Mr and Mrs Wilde only became uglier towards one another...

"You've been acting strange all morning," growled Nick. "Why are you taking your problems out on our child?"

"They aren't My problems, they're yours too!" Judy retorted sharply.

Nick rolled his eyes. "Fine. We share the load. Now tell me what's wrong?"

"It's our son." Judy said, quivering with anger. "He's not right in the head."

"There's nothing wrong with my son." Nick replied carefully, holding Elliot close.

Judy narrowed her eyes. "Well, clever fox," she said venomously. "Haven't you noticed the way he treats you versus the way he treats me?"

Nick shrugged. "He likes daddy more."

"It's insane!"

"It's normal." Nick said slowly, giving Elliot a gentle pet behind the ears.

Judy's ears twitched. "He's a threat to society."

"He's a one year old child!"

"He's a savage, Nick!"

Nick frowned. "Go eat a carrot, bunny. We're done here." Nick turned and left the kitchen.

Judy's heart leapt in her throat. Did Nick just divorce her? Or was she taking his words too seriously. She realized all at once that Elliot was not only putting a strain on her life, but on her marriage as well.

Nick was someone she wanted to spend the rest of her lifespan with. And Elliot was jeopardizing it.

Judy followed Nick closely, wiping the wetness from her eyes. "Nick..." She whispered, laying a paw on his arm.

Nick shrugged her off, giving her a cold, green-eyed stare. He put Elliot on the floor with the deer, baboon, and tiger children. A puzzle of a rain forest was spread out on the floor.

On the television screen, Nemo cried for his daddy as the scuba divers came and took him away in a sandwich bag.

"They all play so well together." Remarked the baboon as he munched on a piece of cheese.

"How sweet," said the tiger mother.

"Oo, I brought my camera!" Said Clawhauster excitedly. "Can

I...?"

Nick patted the fat cheetah affectionately on the arm. "By all means, snap away!"

"Nick, I really would like to speak to you in private..." Judy said in his ear, breathing down his neck.

Nick bared his teeth at her. "Can't we just do one good thing for Elliot? Please? It's his birthday." Nick turned his back to her.

Judy turned swiftly and went to the kitchen to cry, bending over the sink as sobs retched from her body. "Why isn't he listening to me...?" She whispered to her dark, glossy reflection in the sink.

Beside the sink on the counter she saw the knife which Clawhauster planned the cut the cake with.

If she could just steal Elliot for a few minutes, maybe it would be long enough to...

No. What was she thinking? Killing Elliot? Do mothers really think these thoughts, or was she really going crazy?

Judy turned on the water and washed off her face.

The screams coming from the living room were slightly muffled because of this.

By the second scream, Judy ran into the living room, nearly falling over from sheer nerves.

She expected blood, gore, vore- but what she really saw destroyed her.

All the little children held hands and danced in a circle around the tiger father, who covered his eyes with his paws, then peek-a-boo'd one of the children at random.

All of the little animals shrieked with laughter- Elliot the loudest of them all.

They were all... Happy.

Nick, sitting on the couch next to the baboon, noticed her and stared. Slowly, he shook his head, as if to say "don't you dare spoil this moment". Suddenly, his ears perked up and he looked down at her paw, his mouth popping open in horror.

Judy looked down and saw that she was holding the cake knife- by the blade. To her surprise, she didn't even feel the pain in her paw. The pain in her heart surpassed this.

Nick started to get up from the couch, but Judy shook her head and ran out of the room and into her bedroom, slamming the door shut.

Fumbling paws locked the bedroom door. Judy flung the knife away from

herself and sat down against the door, whimpering.

"There's something terribly wrong with me..." She whispered. "I thought it was Elliot- all this time, has it been me?"

Not knowing the answer, the rabbit cuddled herself and wept.

13. Chapter 13

"Thank you for coming everyone, but I'm afraid we're going to have to cut the party short." Nick said, giving the guests a sympathetic smile.

Nicholas wanted to go through with the party and make Elliot feel special. But he was too concerned for his wife to do so. He took the small wrapped presents from the guests and thanked them, placing them in a pile by the front door.

The large cheetah was the last to leave.

"I'm going straight to Walrus-Mart to develop the pictures! I took so many." Clawhauster said, all smiles. "I'll come over later and give them to you."

Nick nodded, not really listening. "All right, see you later big guy." The fox then closed the door.

Behind him, Elliot stood beside the wall, holding one of the presents in his paw.

Nick turned and looked down at his son. "We can't open those right now. We have to wait for mommy."

Elliot didn't like this answer; first he threw the present, then threw himself into the floor.

"What's wrong, Elly?" Nick hesitated. "Do you not want to go see mommy?"

Elliot sat up and stared at Nick with his pale blue eyes. His mouth opened: "NO." He said.

Nick frowned, then picked up Elliot. He didn't tell him where they were going.

The child clung to his father, purring; his purring stopped when they reached the bedroom door.

Nick knocked gently, securing Elliot with one arm. "Judy...?"

The rabbit flinched and hurriedly moved away from the door like a naughty child, hiding herself in the blankets. As Nick used a claw to pick the lock, Judy settled herself and acted like she was asleep.

The fox entered the room and saw the rabbit resting. He placed Elliot on the foot of the bed and walked over to his wife, laying a paw on her face.

"Judy..." He whispered. He wanted to wake her up, yet at the same time, he wanted her to rest. "You must be exhausted..." Nick said quietly, petting Judy's face affectionately.

Elliot located one of Judy's feet through the covers and grabbed onto it with his one hand, tightly. He lowered his sharp mouth towards the hunk of living flesh and bit down slowly.

Judy's eyes snapped open; she gasped in terror, not wanting to be bit, and kicked out wildly with both legs, sending Elliot flying and landing on the floor.

"Judy!" Shouted Nick, his teeth clenched. He grabbed his wife by the arm and jerked her out from underneath the covers. He raised her arm high over her head, crippling her from the strain.

"Ow!" She whimpered.

"Stop it!" Snapped Nick. "Just stop it! What is the matter with you?!"

"N-nothing!" Judy said, cringing.

Nick flung her away and went over to Elliot, who laid stiff on his side like a dead toad.

"Elly?" Nick stopped down and reached to pick up his son.

But Elliot had gotten ahold of the cake knife; he turned quickly and stabbed Nicholas in the throat, the blade see-sawing into his vocal cords.

Judy screamed in horror, watching Elliot butcher Nick. "Why?!" She cried. "Why not me?!"

Neither Elliot nor the gurgling Nick could give her an answer.

She could not deny the unshakable love she felt for Nick, and to see him butchered for no reason made her wish she was the victim.

The rabbit ran over and drove her foot into the side of her son's head, punting him with such force that he smacked into the opposite wall.

"Ghuhh...urhk..." Nick said, his eyes as big as limes, his limbs wiggling uselessly as he went into shock.

"Shhh, I'm here. You'll be all right." Judy got on her knees and cradled Nick's head in her lap, her paws pressing against his open wound. "It's going to be okay now."

Elliot did not move from his crumpled position on the floor.

From the looks of it, Nick's wound wasn't nearly as gruesome as they both originally thought. The wound was deep, but the damage was manageable. Judy grabbed a pillow and pulled off its crisp white case. She used this to tie around Nicholas' throat, as a gauze.

The knife sat on the floor next to the bed. It was far out of Elliot's reach, who... Was missing.

Judy sucked in her breath, looking around the room. The rabbit called for him urgently. "Elliot!?" Then, more gently, "Elly...?"

The child didn't make an appearance. All that Judy could see and hear was her husband, vulnerable and bleeding in her arms. The wound was coagulating nicely; Judy helped Nick stand up and the two of them walked arm in arm into the living room.

Judy deposited Nick on the couch, then grabbed her cell phone from beneath the cushions, dialing 911.

As she waited for someone to answer, her eyes darted around the room, searching... Where could Elliot be hiding? And why? Was he remorseful about his actions? Or was he waiting in the shadows like the savage he was?

Nick reached up and took hold of her paw, guiding her to sit beside him.

"Sss... Sssorr..." Nick struggled to speak.

Judy shook her head quickly. "It's fine." She lied. She couldn't sit beside him; she felt as if Elliot would drop down like a spider and kill them both. Judy got to her feet and paced.

"Beep beep beep." Her phone said quietly, then died.

"Sugar!" Snapped Judy, who pocketed the useless phone and turned to Nick. "Where is your phone?" She asked.

Nicholas' eyes flickered; he swayed in his seat, the loss of blood making him lethargic.

"Nick...?" Judy sat back down beside him.

The fox hunched over and opened his mouth; blood pooled and overflowed from his lips. Something was wrong.

"Nick?" Judy shook him by the shoulders. "Nicholas?"

Elliot squeezed out from behind the fox and jumped to the floor, wielding the bloodied cake knife.

Judy stared at Elliot, then screamed: "You demon! I'm going to kill you!"

This is when the doorbell rang.

14. Chapter 14

Elliot whipped his head to the front door, dropping the knife in surprise as someone began to knock heavily. He was afraid.

Judy used this against him. "They're coming to take you away, you monster. They're going to torture you to death. And I'm going to watch them do it." Whether or not he could understand all of her words didn't matter; she felt better for saying them.

"Hello?" Said the large cheetah. "I've brought the pictures. Can I come in?"

"Clawhauster!" Judy breathed. He can help Nick and protect them from Elliot! The rabbit took a step forward, then stopped.

Elliot stood in the hallway, blocking her.

Judy frowned, then took a few quick steps and jumped clean over the boy, reaching the front door easily. "Hah!" She said, turning back to face Elliot.

But he was gone.

Judy, biting on her lip, turned and opened the door, letting Clawhauster in. "Hurry," she whispered, pulling him inside by his pant's buckle. The large animal came in and closed the door.

"Why are we whispering?" Asked Clawhauster softly, ducking in order to be heard. "Is this part of a surprise?"

"Shhh!" Judy said. She tread softly across the floor, looking around with huge purple eyes. "Where are you, you devil..." She muttered.

She entered the living room and cried out in alarm. Nick was missing! "Oh no, oh no, oh no...!" She shook her head wildly. "He's not here!"

"Whose not here?" The cheetah asked.

"Nick...!" Judy felt her strength draining. Nick was gone... What if he was dead in a closet somewhere, his organs spilled all over Elliot- who thinks it's all a sick game?

A game... Of course! That's all it was! Just one big family fun time!

Judy threw back her head and laughed. "Hahahah!"

Clawhauster laughed with her, finding the situation comical.

"You stupid, slow cheetah," Judy wiped tears of laughter from her face, patting the fat predator on the arm. "You have no idea what's going on here."

"Hey, I'm not fat..." The cheetah mumbled, suddenly not liking Judy as much anymore.

"Help me find Nick and Elliot," said Judy as she stepped around the couch, sniffing.

Clawhauster sniffed too, loudly. "Why does it smell like blood in your house? Was there an accident?"

Judy nodded, looking under the couch. "Something like that."

Clawhauster looked around the room. He wandered into the kitchen, then stood in the hallway, shuffling his big paws across the floor.

"Umm. Judy? What exactly am I looking for?" He asked.

"Nick. And. Elliot!" Judy snapped, slamming the pantry door shut.

"But why can't you find them...?" Asked the cheetah.

Judy sighed and faced Clawhauster. "Because we're playing hide and seek."

The cheetah's eyes lit up like stars. "Ooooh!" He said, nodding understandably. "Then... I'll go search upstairs!"

"We don't have an upstairs." Judy pushed past the cheetah and went into the master bedroom. Blood was on the floor where Elliot had first attacked Nick. There would be a stain there.

Judy peeked under the bed, then went into the bathroom. Her own reflection startled her; she looked so frightened. Judy closed her eyes and breathed deeply over the sink. "He's just a baby... I can do this..."

She opened one of the drawers and took out a curling iron; anything could become a weapon if used properly.

"Oh my gosh!" Cried the cheetah from the hallway.

Judy ran over, wielding the iron like a mighty sword. "Where?!" She shouted, ready to strike.

Clawhauster pointed to the wall, where streaks of blood spread out like jelly over toast.

Judy wondered, privately, if predators are drawn to the scent of blood, and if it tastes good; that would explain Elliot's ravenous behavior... Wouldn't it?

But then the cheetah screwed up his face and pinched his nose with a paw. "It's so strong...!" He complained.

Judy ducked under Clawhauster and ran into the second bedroom.

It was there that she found the body of her husband, and the beast known as her son.

Nicholas laid out on the floor, wheezing, Elliot standing on his chest, his one arm clenching a shard of glass.

Where he obtained this glass, Judy had no idea. But the child held onto it tightly and used it to drill into the side of the fox's head, bloodied fur clumping as this procedure exposed the skull.

"NO!" Judy screamed, running over to the scene. She swung the curling iron hard into her son's face; the boy flew across the room and hit the wall hard.

Clawhauster entered the room and gasped, covering his face with his paws. He didn't know what to say.

But Judy did. She fell beside Nick and pulled him into her arms. "Oh

Nick... Tell me you're all right..."

"Eh...rm..." He whispered.

"What?" Judy bent closer.

"Eh...lee...it..."

Judy turned quickly; Elliot stood on top of the window sill, grinning ear to ear. Something was in his paw; it was a toe. A big fat cheetah toe.

Clawhauster jumped up onto the twin-sized bed, howling in pain. "It hurts so much...!" He cried.

A terrible laughter filled the room, coming from precious little Elly, covered in the blood of his victims.

"Deer god..." Whispered Judy, holding Nicholas close.

End
file.